

Intangible Cultural Heritage Update

News and notes on
Newfoundland and Labrador's
Intangible Cultural
Heritage Program

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2010 Mummers Festival

In December of 2009, the Heritage Foundation of Newfoundland and Labrador started the Mummers Festival to celebrate this part of our local culture.

The Festival featured public lectures, workshops, films and art events all on the theme of mummering.

The celebrations ended with a bang: a huge Mummers Parade that wound through the streets of St. John's, finishing with a kitchen party at The Rooms.

Originally planned as a one-off event, mummering enthusiasts have created a separate organization, with plans to make the festival an annual event.

"I think the parade has a lot of opportunity to grow," says Festival coordinator Ryan Davis. "It engages a lot of different people, so you get people who are very young, you get children and families, you get groups of friends, you get seniors, you get people who've never mummered, you get experienced mummers, you get people from the city and people from outside. I think that combination of people in one place makes for a very diverse, dynamic event."

This year, participants can make a hobby horse, attend a lecture about mummering past and present, or take part in the parade Rig Up, the province's largest dress-up party, to get ready for the parade itself. The parade line up starts on Saturday, December 18th at 1:45 pm at Macpherson Elementary School, 40 Newtown Road (behind Sobey's on Merrymeeting Road). The parade starts at 2:00 pm.

For full details on the Mummers Parade, and how you can participate, visit the website at www.mummersfestival.ca.



Hobby Horse Workshops

By Melissa Squarey, ICH Programs Assistant

It was a cool evening in St. John's on the first of December. I found myself wandering through a snow-less Victoria Park around 7pm searching for those crazy folks with the Mummers Parade who were hosting a Hobby Horse Making Workshop there. In the middle of the park on the East side sits a quaint pool house that looks rather dark from the outside. I find my way into the warmth and light of the building where Ryan Davis (festival coordinator) is stacking cardboard and getting everything ready. A few others are there, some who had participated last year. I was glad to be in the warm building and excited to be making my very own hobby horse but, I don't think I really knew what I was getting into.

This first night was spent cutting out cardboard templates that just looked raggedy and un-horselike. Soon after we had them cut out though, we began folding and softening the cardboard in sections. The 'Red Green' fix all solution came out of the woodwork (duct tape) and we began putting the horses' head together.

Lo and behold we all began to see the shape of our very own mysterious hobby horses. After the head was shaped the hole for the broomstick cut, we began working on our mouthpieces. They started out block of wood but, with a few old nails and some hard work hammering, they quickly became teeth. With a bit more of team effort and some hot glue we gave our horses teeth.

On Sunday Dec. 5th I managed to finish my Hobby Horse. I covered the head with a dark corduroy fabric, then added, some bottle cap eyes, and then finally added fur ears, mane, and whiskers. This horse even has a mustache!

Sunday was actually quite a busy day for hobby horse making. There were numerous families that came to join in the fun of turning cardboard into an animal. Once I was finished adding things to my own horse I got a chance to speak to some of the other individuals making horses.

Debbie and her family reused some fabric from an old Halloween costume. Another family made a horse out of army camouflage material and another horse out of pink flowery fabric and a blond wig. Li made a white stallion ready for the ride on Dec. 18th. There was even someone to film the making

of the hobby horses. After all this fun you'd think we'd had enough but, not us. Instead, we are ready for more as a herd of Hobby Horses in the Mummers Parade!

My own horse has a story and as the evening went on many of the horses did also have their own stories and backgrounds. My horse is named Rufus. He's an old horse who's just a little bitter about the world but means well, regardless of how gruff he seems. He's the grandfather to Janet's Princess Mitzy. Rufus has a few missing teeth and quite a lot more wrinkles than one would expect but beneath it all he is rather ageless. I look forward to my years with Rufus and the Mumming Traditions.

I honestly feel that these workshops are bringing a resurgence of the old ways of having fun. I look around the Victoria Park Pool house and see how kids who have so much more technology growing up now can learn to create things by hand with cardboard and fabric. It makes me smile and think warmly of the kids who are able to understand that fun doesn't always involve a cartoon or a handheld device.



Conception Bay South Heritage Series

By Karen Spencer

Located near St. John's, the Town of Conception Bay South has been growing in leaps and bounds with modern subdivisions springing up all over town and major commercial development. To help ensure we don't forget our rural roots, and to help guarantee a lasting legacy of Cupids 400, the Town has just launched the first three booklets in the Conception Bay South Heritage Series.

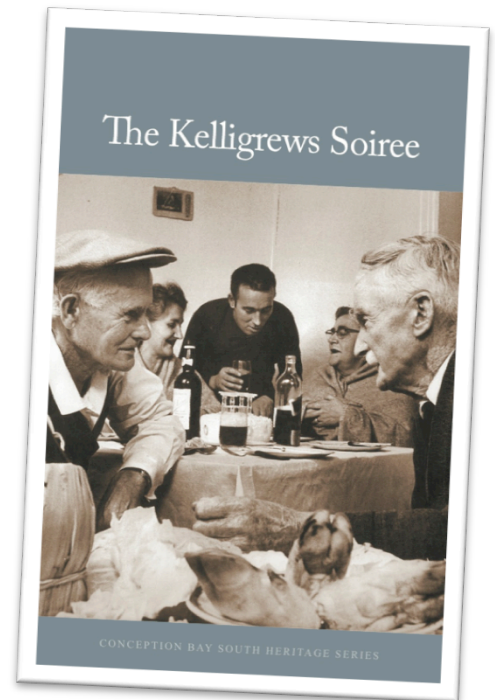
The Kelligrews Soiree

"The Kelligrews Soiree" is a 32-page booklet that tells the story of a folksong written by Johnny Burke (1851 – 1931) of St. John's - one of the great folk song writers of North America. The Kelligrews Soiree was penned around the year 1900 and was written to poke fun at the foibles of St. John's "society" who were putting on airs in Kelligrews every summer at local folk festivals and tea parties.

Johnny Burke was a poet, playwright, songwriter, theatre owner and even tried his hand as an auctioneer. "The Bard of Prescott Street," as he came to be known, was a much-recognized figure in and around St. John's.

His best-known song "The Kelligrews Soiree" became popular and went through several re-writes by Burke to suit his purposes, to the point where several famous American politicians and boxers were pegged as guests at the Soiree.

Still today, singers and folk music experts from around North America study and speculate about the meaning of the words to the famous song and locals have been kicking up their heels each summer for decades at The Kelligrews Soiree Folk Festival which pays homage to Burke's legacy.



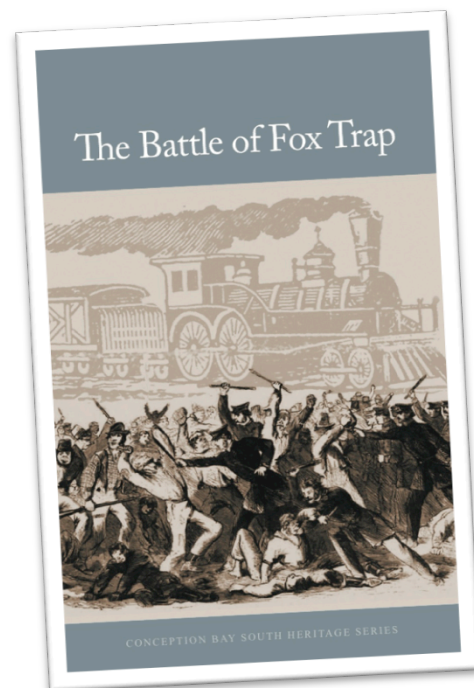
The Battle of Fox Trap

This 38-page booklet tells the story of a fight in Fox Trap in 1880, which nearly jeopardized the economic development of the Colony of Newfoundland. It's about five or six days of rioting and rage between farmers of the South Shore of Conception Bay and railway surveyors that symbolized a battle about Newfoundland, about its future, about its economy and its way of life.

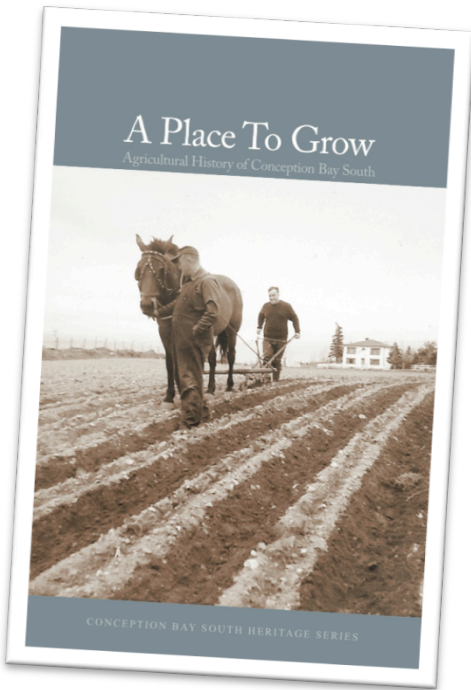
Those surveyors were bringing more than just a railroad through local potato fields and cabbage patches, they were bringing Confederation with Canada, or so the residents believed. And the thought of that inflamed the whole South Shore, from Topsail to Seal Cove. To find out more, you'll have to read the story!

A Place to Grow: The Agricultural History of Conception Bay South

Coming in at 35 pages, this booklet tells of how one of the first things Newfoundland's new Governor, Erasmus Gower did upon his appointment in 1804 was to take stock of people and property settled on the island. The resulting "Plantation Book," showed one of the most crowded places was Port de Grave. The south side of Conception Bay had little settlement at the time as there were few natural coves and harbours to support the fishing effort but people from Port de Grave would visit the South Shore in the summer to cut wood.



It was only natural they would take the time to set vegetables after clearing the land and to visit the sandy beaches to collect capelin. Eventually families from Port de Grave staked their claims on the South Shore and the area began to thrive. By 1903, the farmers of the South Shore were supplying nearly all vegetables needed for St. John's.



By the 1940s, the settlements that make up Conception Bay South formed the butchering capital of Newfoundland for many years. One of the biggest operations belonged to Thomas Metcalfe whose farm buildings, though now mostly empty, remain in tip top shape.

Today 45 people in the Conception Bay South are registered as full time farmers and many old barns remain. You can still take a Sunday drive along the shore and pick up fresh ingredients for your jiggs dinner. Doug Taylor, a sixth generation Taylor of Foxtrap, is quoted in the booklet as saying. "They thought so much of their land, their land was everything.... I'll never sell...the land to me is like something living."

Writing and publication of the booklets was made possible by Cupids 400 Inc., the province's Cultural Economic Development Program, volunteer hours donated by C.B.S. Heritage Advisory Committee, and the research and writing talents of Craig Westcott of Spectrum Communications.

Copies of the booklets may be purchased at a cost of \$4.00 each by contacting Karen Spencer at Conception Bay South Parks Commission, telephone (709) 834-6558, email kspencer@cbsparks.nf.net. They make great stocking stuffers!

Bonfire Night Memories on DAI

By Dale Jarvis, ICH Development Officer

This past November, the Heritage Foundation of Newfoundland and Labrador organized our "Festival on Fire" – a celebration of fire traditions and culture. The event included talks, presentations, and lantern making workshops, and culminated with a series of community bonfires to commemorate Bonfire Night on November 5th. Over 40 communities took part in the festival, from all across the province. I also took part in a CBC Radio Noon crosstalk program on the theme of Bonfire Night, and people called in with their own memories.

One phrase that came up a few times during the festival was "bucking."

"November 4th was called 'bucking' night," remembers Joy Barfoot, of Greenspond. "After dark, groups of children (and it seemed all ages) would go out with flashlights to find other groups' boughs. The idea was to 'buck / take' other people's boughs without being caught."

HFNL staff completed several interviews on the topic of bonfire night, all of which have been added to Memorial University's Digital Archives Initiative (<http://collections.mun.ca>). There, you can find recent interviews on Bonfire Nights in Change Islands, Robinsons, Heart's Delight, Heart's Content, Bay Roberts and other communities. We've also digitized a few older interviews from the Memorial University Folklore and Language Archive, from Shearstown and Wesleyville.

We are always looking for more interviews to be added to the ICH inventory. If you have a memory of bonfire night you'd like to share, let us know, and we'll set up an interview time. You can reach me by email at ich@heritagefoundation.ca.





Baccalieu Trail Public Folklore Project – First Meeting

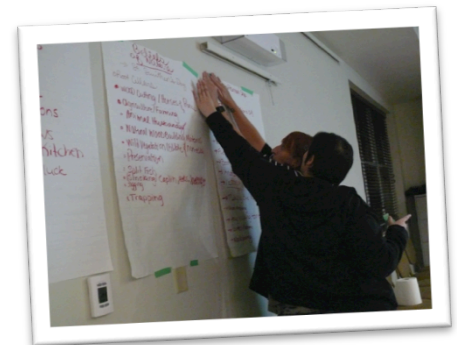
by Dale Jarvis, ICH Development Officer

On November 17th, we had our first meeting for the Baccalieu Trail Public Folklore Project, with representation from Bay Roberts, Brigus, Carbonear, Clarke's Beach, New Perlican, Roche's Line, and Winterton. We also had four graduate students from Memorial University Department of Folklore's new Public Folklore program.

Melissa Squarey, our new ICH Programs assistant, gave an introduction to intangible cultural heritage, and then I facilitated a discussion about what elements of folklore existed in the region and in the memories of the participants. Topics ranged from memories of small commercial stores and shops, to local nicknames, rhymes, parades, and the best way to cure warts.

At the end of the session, participants ranked items in terms of what they were most worried about losing. Of the things communities feel are most under threat in the region, participants listed, in order of greatest threat: Old Time Concerts; Yarns, informal tales, and the context of storytelling; Fishing Marks, Boatbuilding and Nautical Lore; Accents/linguistics; Faeries; Agriculture/Farming; Vocabulary; Food Rituals; Geographic Names; Recitation; Fabric Arts; and, Photo Albums.

Over the next few months, our office will be developing and delivering workshops throughout the Baccalieu Trail region, focusing on some of these themes. In particular, we are looking at designing a specific project that looks at the tradition of Old Time Concerts. This project will interview people who have memories of concerts, and possibly include a "Festival of Times" with a series of local concerts throughout the region.



"Times" as described by folklorist Pauline Greenhill are "formal occasions. They are put on by church or other women's organizations to raise money for charitable and community efforts, and they attract both local people and visitors from other outports."

A concert or time could comprise variously of music, food, storytelling, prepared monologues or recitations, and dance. Writing on the concert tradition, folklorists Herbert Halpert and John Widdowson note that "performances at the more public of these occasions included not only songs but also plays, recitations and stories. Many of these were locally composed, but many were drawn either from the older traditional repertory or had been learned more recently, sometimes from printed sources." As such, times present an excellent opportunity to document a range of living traditions and practices.

For more information about the Baccalieu Trail Public Folklore Project, you can call me at 1-888-739-1892 ext 2, or subscribe to the ICH blog at the web address below for news as it unfolds.

References: Greenhill, P. The Family Album: Outport Culture and a Newfoundland Woman's Recitation. *Canadian Woman Studies* 7.3 (1986)

H. Halpert and J. Widdowson. *Folktales of Newfoundland* (1996)